

CASE STUDY

DISCOVER®

Skills partner since 2020

The Company

Discover Financial Services provides banking and credit products that help customers achieve their goals—from establishing good credit, to paying for a college education, to consolidating debt.

In June 2021, Discover opened its first customer care center in 20 years, located in Chatham, on Chicago's South Side. With 81% of the staff residing within 5 miles of the facility, Discover is making good on its promise to hire locally, impact the quality of life of its team, and invest in the community.

At its 100-day mark, the Chatham customer care center had received **top customer satisfaction scores**.

The Partnership

As part of Discover's expansion plans, Skills met with their stakeholders to explore supporting their presence in a South or West Side neighborhood of Chicago, historically disinvested communities often overlooked for corporate jobs. **This neighborhood impact initiative will welcome 1,000 employees from the surrounding area by the end of 2024** while working with local leaders to invest in and strengthen the community.

Executives and staff from Skills were involved in seven key project areas with a focus on Site Selection, Community Engagement and Human Resources strategy. Skills also leveraged key partnerships with the City of Chicago, World Business Chicago and CBRE.

Success Story

Brock Thurman is a native South Sider hailing from Auburn Gresham—just a short distance from Discover's brand-new customer care center in Chatham.

After two years away at college, Brock came home after his grandmother passed away. **He needed a job with economic and career mobility.**

A former coworker told him about new jobs at Discover. "It sounded great, but was it real? **Full-time, well-paying jobs in Chatham? Typically, jobs like that are in the Loop or the suburbs, not on the South Side. But this was different.**"

Since joining Discover, Brock can see his future opening up, with opportunities to become a team lead, a manager, and then learning all aspects of the business. He can picture going back to school and finishing his degree. "Then owning my own business so I can bring more jobs to my community, and with them, generational wealth to Chicago's Black families."

"Thank you Discover for seeing the value in me and Chatham."

Our journey to Chatham started before the pandemic and Skills was with us every step of the way. From site selection, working with the Mayor's office on a public announcement, and being introduced to key leaders and organizations in the community, Skills' counsel and guidance along the way was critical to the success in opening our Chatham Customer Care Center and being welcomed in the community.

Andy Eichfeld | *Chief of Human Resources & Chief Administrative Officer*
Discover

How We Work

Skills' primary role was to provide consult, build up project awareness, and develop operational plans ahead of a decision by Discover Financial Services on how to move forward with their community location investment, and to determine what role we could play in support of project implementation.

Together with Discover, we established a steering committee and a project plan template to collaboratively build out tasks, roles, and responsibilities. We also identified project managers and convened project teams comprised of key subject matter experts.



Executing & Evaluating the Work

Our project verticals were: Executive Leadership; Location & Site Selection; Recruitment; Operations; Community Engagement; Communications & Public Relations; and Project Management.

Of these seven, the following were the central areas of focus of shared support:

- **Location & Site Selection** evaluated Discover's immediate need as identifying any promising locations to pursue in a South or West Side neighborhood on an expedited timeline. Our team helped validate the timeline, participated in site tours, and conducted wraparound community analysis of the site—from the available talent pool to transportation and dining options. Discover ultimately selected Chatham as the site of their new Customer Care Center.
- **Recruitment** provided a la carte options to create quality jobs, including a sourcing timeline to support Q4 '20 hiring, with a plan for continuing this work into 2021. Our team worked with HR and Operations executives to provide data on the available talent pool while focusing on Discover's focus on hiring within a 3-5 mile radius of the center.
- **Community Engagement** helped build a strategy including identifying key local stakeholder groups for alignment and partnership. We provided a low-risk opportunity for awareness and validation of the proposed neighborhood investment. From pre- to post-launch, our team facilitated conversations with community stakeholders and provided support for engaging the community through key events.
- **Communications & Public Relations** created, tested, and delivered a plan for messaging and branding Discover's community investment.

To measure progress and ensure optimal results, we established a regular cadence of conversations with workstream leads between Skills and Discover to identify opportunities, reduce risk, and support project implementation. The Skills Project Lead provided weekly updates from all verticals to Discover's senior team. Internally, Skills team leads met to discuss implementation against the plan, risks, blockers, and opportunities. And we supported the development of a comprehensive project plan used by Discover to track the project metrics at a glance.



Results

Transitioned a site planning MOU into continued support after launch.

Embedded staff to support Chatham customer care center hiring goals in 2021 and provided recruitment and marketing support to fill over 125 roles as Discover ramps up to 1,000 jobs in Chatham by 2024.

Engaged 400+ stakeholders across community organizations, government, and the community itself.

Convened a VIP call with ten community stakeholders and built a framework for the Community Roundtable to support future conversations.

Launched the ShineBright virtual platform in order to engage stakeholders and lift up interested potential partners.

Chatham customer care center featured by Discover CEO at Executives' Club appearance and by Skills CEO in a Chicago Tribune op-ed.